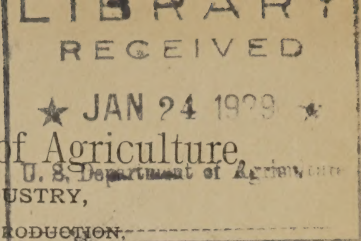


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United States Department of Agriculture

BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY,

FOREIGN SEED AND PLANT INTRODUCTION

WASHINGTON, D. C.

CHINESE CULTURAL METHODS FOR THE LEITCHEE (*Litchi chinensis*).

Leitchee trees flourish best in a soft, moist, black soil; alluvium seems best. Near or on the bank of a stream is the best location, though this is not essential. Where there is no stream the trees should be watered so frequently that the ground below the surface is always moist; about twice a week when rain is abundant should be enough. After the young trees are well started, say two or three years old, the irrigation may be less frequent.

Frost can not be borne at all by the trees. They will not flourish north of the frost line. They are particularly sensitive to cold while young. It is the custom in China to wrap the trees with straw to protect them from the cold. After the trees are four or five years old they are less sensitive and it takes quite a heavy frost to injure them.

Pruning is not practiced with the leitchee. The leaves and the branches and blossoms are allowed to grow without molestation. It is notable that the companion tree, the lingeng, is treated in exactly the opposite way by the Chinese cultivators. The only pruning seems to be that required to prevent the young tree from bearing until it is five or six years old. This is very important, especially so with the lingeng.

Propagation is accomplished by tying a ball of earth about eight inches in diameter to a joint on a branch of a good tree. This is done in February or March. An earthen vessel with the bottom broken out is fastened to the top of the ball, and this is filled with water almost daily. In about eight months the branch may be cut off and planted in the manner above described. The young tree should be planted in similar soil to that of the earth ball.

Blossoms appear in April. They are very small and make very little change in the tree's appearance. The blossoms fall off or thin themselves out without trouble to the horticulturist. The fruit ripens in July. It is a bright red in color when ripe, and at a little distance a stranger would mistake it for a strawberry, being like that fruit in color, shape, and size. However, it has a rough rind or thick skin, which breaks off easily. The meat is white, slightly tart, and very delicious. Who can describe a taste?

The seeds are both large and small on the same tree. The small pit is of course much more desirable, but so far the Chinese do not seem to know how to develop uniformly small-seeded fruit. They claim that the blossoms that come out first develop small-seeded fruit and the later ones are large. However, there are trees which bear many small-seeded leitchees and others that are uniformly the opposite. The Chinese think the original tree and the soil have much to do with this.

Grafting is not practiced with the leitchees, so far as I can learn. This is also in marked contrast to the methods with the lingeng culture.

Fertilization is important. Guano is probably as good as anything. The Chinese use night soil. They dig a shallow trench around the tree at the end of the roots and fill it with liquid manure of some sort. This is done about once in three months.

Enemies the leitchee has, as all good things do. There is a worm that makes a ring around the tree under the bark. When the circle is complete the tree dies. But the bark is broken by the worm, and by careful watching this can be prevented before the worm does serious damage. There is also a sort of mildew upon the leaves in certain years that does much harm, and the Chinese do not seem to have any way of dealing with it. If these do not get into America with the imported plants they may never trouble you at all there.—
(Prepared by Rev. William N. Brewster, Hinghua, Fukien, China, 1906.)

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